

35. From Sacrifice to Church

I now see God's pattern of heart in the Old Testament, a pattern that is as clear as day, but has never been seen.

This pattern comes clear for us in the junction of Isaiah and Jeremiah, an unwanted Messiah weeping over the Church. And the thing is, in order to comprehend God's meaning in the men and women of the captivity and restoration and the books they wrote, we must first know this pattern.

It is a pattern that begins with Abel and does not end until the Day of Pentecost where the same pattern begins anew, a pattern that begins with sacrifice and ends with Church and that weaves solidly through all in-between.

The Pattern of Fulfillment. First, I want to give a brief outline of how this pattern is woven through those devoted ones we have already come to know. Then, I hope to state it as simply and as clearly as I can. The center meaning of this lesson, however, is the suffering Messiah of Isaiah and the tears of Jeremiah over a wayward and broken city.

Inside this pattern, then, we find one of the most astonishing statements in the Old Testament, one line in Isaiah 53:10 – He shall see His seed.

And thus we will be able to show how God makes His way from Lamentations to 1 John 3:16 and to us – And we also.

Only One Church. For He Himself is our peace, having made both Judeans and ethnic peoples one, and having dissolved the wall of separation... that from the two [Judeans and ethnic peoples] He might create inside Himself one new man, making peace. And that He might reconcile both completely to God inside one body through the cross, having killed in that cross the hostility (Ephesians 2:14-16).

There is and has only been one Church, one body together, from Abel until now. All thought of separation between Old Testament people and Christians is eliminated by the cross.

Abraham – Moses – David are Christians; for Jesus lives in their hearts and connects them with us in one body.

For Jerusalem. Joshua took God's people into the Promised Land in 1422 BC, a year of Jubilee. David became king of all Israel in 1022 BC, a year of Jubilee, and soon after made Jerusalem into "the city of David."

Then, God filled His completed temple with Himself in 972 BC, again, a year of Jubilee. This was His fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles in pattern form, in the city of David, Jerusalem, the Church.

The love of David for Jerusalem, then, is God's great metaphor for the love of Jesus for His Church. God had said through Moses, "In the place that I have chosen." That place was Jerusalem.

Focused on Jerusalem. At the same time, this is what was said of Abraham. – Through faith he continued as a stranger in the land of promise, since it belonged to others, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, joint-heirs together with him of the same promise. For he was expecting the city having foundations, whose engineer and builder is God (Hebrews 11).

And so Abraham as well was focused on Jerusalem, yes, but through Jerusalem, the Church.

Everything in the Old Testament, then, from Abel to David builds towards Jerusalem, and everything from David to Malachi is focused upon that same Jerusalem.

An Immensity of Passion. Again, both Paul and John make it clear that the natural city from their time until now is NOT God's Jerusalem, rather, Jerusalem is the entire Church, the mother

of us all. Yet Jerusalem will not hear, just as the Church of Christ will not hear the gospel of her Salvation.

From the death of Solomon until Isaiah and Hezekiah, God seems to focus on the northern kingdom, specifically, Elijah and Elisha. Yet the fruit of the ministry of those two was to send many from the north back down to Jerusalem before the northern captivity.

Yet we are seeing, now, the immensity of passion towards Jerusalem found in the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Two Parts of the Pattern. The love David had for Jerusalem only increases in Jeremiah. Then, the restoration prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, along with Nehemiah and Ezra, are all focused on Jerusalem – that she would HEAR!

The Old is only a pattern and a road-sign for the New, and thus the “hearing” is – “and those who hear the voice of the Son out from God will LIVE” (John 5).

A Jerusalem, passionately loved and wept over, then, is one part of this incredible pattern. The other part is the individual, often solitary men and women who placed themselves before God for Jerusalem’s sake.

And We Also. We saw in the last lesson that the heart of Jeremiah and the heart of Jesus over Jerusalem were the same.

I could imagine that 1 John 3:16 has grown larger in my sight in the present time than all of the other ruling verses of the gospel, except that I could also say the same about each of the others, for they are all increasing exponentially. – By this we have known love, because He set forth his soul, His story of self, for us, for our sakes; and we also are committed to setting forth our souls for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

Jesus loves us, His firstfruits, then we turn and love the entire Church.

Passion of Heart. As we look at each of these Old Testament men and women, from Abel to Malachi, we have one primary purpose, and that is to know their heart relationship with God – a man after My own Heart.

I have never known or heard tell of these people in this way. It is a most amazing thing to discover that Jeremiah is my brother, David is my brother, Ruth is my sister, Abel is my brother, and that we share the same heart with them, the Lord Jesus and His overwhelming DESIRE over His Church.

This PASSION of heart over Jerusalem, that she would hear the voice of God speaking to her and LIVE, is the entire meaning of the Old Testament – and of the New.

The Only Entrance. If Christ lives inside of my heart through my faith, then that same faith tells me that the Passion of Jesus over His Church, a Passion that is made even more real to me by the tears of Jeremiah, fills my heart to overflowing as well.

No one who comes to God by themselves can enter into His Heart. Those who enter into God's Heart to become His authority in creation are those who say, "Here am I, I and all my brothers and sisters WITH ME."

We will never read the prophetic word of the Old Testament in any other way, now, than inside this passion of heart, in tears over God's people to hear and to live.

The First Example. God's first example of Christ to us, Abel, is of great importance, for Abel sets the pattern for all to follow.

If Abel was in his thirties, then, whereas there were three individuals on earth older than he, there were likely thirty younger boys and girls, for Eve was undoubtedly fruitful as God had said.

On the one hand, Abel was a solitary man, as all sheep herders are, but on the other hand, we know that Abel carried a deep concern for his parents and all his brothers and sisters, and especially for his mother, who represents Jerusalem to us. All of them knew lostness, but only Abel took his lostness before God, and all the others with him.

The Pattern of God's Heart. And there, in his loneliness and lostness, and in his deep concern for all his brothers and sisters, Abel felt in his heart to offer himself to God.

Yet the only way he knew how to do such a thing was to choose a lamb from his flock, to shed the blood of that lamb, and to offer it as an in-between. Indeed, Abel was showing us Isaiah 53.

And thus Abel gives us the first and clearest picture of this pattern of God's Heart revealed through all the solitary individuals of the Old Testament story, who place themselves before God, through Jesus and His shed Blood as their in-between, for the sake of His people.

Here Am I. Now, I asked you to look carefully at Isaiah 8:18 inside the context of the whole chapter.

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.

These words are spoken in the midst of the overflowing of Assyria over all the nations, the dark side of the beast, and speaking of our day right now, in the year of our Lord, 2021.

Here Is the Pattern. We could say, then, that Isaiah 53 is the beating heart of the entire Old Testament, the heart's cry of everyone devoted to God through these long centuries of darkness.

Here is the pattern, then, from the sacrifice of Abel to the birthing of the Church, the true Jerusalem of God on the Day of Pentecost, a pattern that repeats itself again with us – AND WE ALSO.

It is the pattern of individual men and women, sharing Hheart with God, placing the Sacrifice of Jesus, and themselves with Him, before God and in tears over those whom God has given to Jesus, that His people would HEAR and that they would LIVE.

The Arm of the Lord. And so Isaiah begins his picture of the suffering Messiah with the same question we have asked before God.

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Of truth, the “arm of the Lord” is this very pattern of individuals sharing Hheart with God over His Church.

He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him...

Hear and Live. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not (John 1).

Let's put in front of our eyes, however, the whole issue.

...The one hearing My word and believing the One having sent Me, possesses age-unfolding life and does not come into judgement, but has already completely changed place out from death and into life. ...The ...dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those having heard will live. Indeed, just as the Father possesses life inside of Himself, so also He gave to the Son to possess life inside of Himself, and He gave to Him authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of man (John 5:24-27).

Getting Our Attention. Jerusalem MUST hear before Jerusalem can live. How will that happen?

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Only one thing gets my attention to convince me – a Man laying down His life, personally, just for me.

Come to Me. Nonetheless, there is something much deeper going on here. You see, Isaiah 53 is the outward appearance of a Man laying down His life for us – and that is what John and Mary saw as they stood watching before the cross. The problem is that outward appearance belongs to and is known by the entire Church, yet she still does not hear!!!

You search diligently the Scriptures, for you imagine to have age-unfolding life in them, and these are bearing witness concerning Me; but you do not want to come to Me, that you might possess life (John 5:40).

If it ain't personal, it ain't real or true.

Only One River. I have said, for academic purposes, “a river of life” and “a river of death.” Yet there is only one river, to life or to death. All humans and most Christians until now have been busy inserting death into the river, for we have that authority.

Here is the pattern. As you and I, carrying all our brothers and sisters in our hearts before God, with tears, speak life into that river, so we cause life to arise in everyone around us, everywhere we go.

Isn't that what Jesus said, "He who believes INTO Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"? Yet now we are seeing the intensity of how real that is.

His Seed. Then, consider these words. – When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.

The "great" and the "strong" refer to 1 John 3:16 – and He shall see His seed, which is, "And we also."

Paul said that as we share His sufferings, so we reign with Him (in judgment).

The Heart of Firstfruits. An offering – And we also are committed to setting forth our souls for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

From Abel to Malachi, God is showing us the heart of His firstfruits, you and me, the Heart of Jesus, sharing Hheart with God.

And we are not troubled by the words "strong" and "great," for we know that God means something quite different in those words than humans mean. It means that we believe all the way into Jesus. Jesus cannot be what He is or do what He does inside the human experience apart from His Body, you and me, a very specific firstfruits of Christ, as James said.

Greater Love. Into this picture, then, let's look again at Jeremiah's tears. – How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow is she... She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her. – Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow... For these things I weep; my eye, my eye overflows with water... – No one comforts her.

Jeremiah was the pattern, inside that which was old, we are the fulfilment, inside all that is New.

He shall see His seed – He shall see the labor of His soul – Greater love has no man than this, that he set forth his soul for his friends.

What I Mean to Say. **“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, ...that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double [two sides] for all her sins”** (Isaiah 40:1-2).

This line is then followed by the description of our task before God in our world right now, to be that prepared highway of God, calling God into the knowledge of all.

What I mean to say, truly, truly, truly, let it be so – it is so, is that the turning of the ages happens when God hears, for real – “Here am I, Father, I and all my brothers and sisters WITH ME.” This is the meaning of this entire study.

Reading for Next Time. The next lesson is “Ezekiel and Judgment.” In it we will look only across the first nine chapters of Ezekiel. And the truth is, this present lesson is essential for us to know God’s definition of judgment.

Here is the JUDGMENT Jesus exercised, given to Him by God – Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. And here is the JUDGMENT given to us – And we also.

Read Ezekiel Chapters 1, 2, 3, 8, and 9. I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of One speaking. – Put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry...

Let’s Pray Together. We are calling the Church of Jesus Christ, more than a hundred million believers in Jesus all across this earth, to HEAR the voice of Jesus as their only life, to hear, to receive, and to live. We are calling them to see the wide-open entrance into all Salvation now, and to run into those wide-open doors.

And we are calling them out from the passion and desire of Jesus that we KNOW fills our hearts to overflowing.

“Lord Jesus, we know that You live inside our hearts because of our confidence that You do. Therefore we know, Lord Jesus, that Your Desire for Your people is our desire as well.

Hear the Word. “And Father, we live inside Your presence as the Lord Jesus Christ, and we carry, here, inside Your Heart, inside of our hearts, all our brothers and sisters across the earth and throughout the heavens, all whom You have given to the Lord Jesus.

“Father, the Passion and Desire of Jesus for the sake of His Church flows out from our hearts, with You, into this world.

“Hear the Word that is Jesus, brothers and sisters in Christ. Let your ears be unstopped, let your mouth be silent, and hear Him alone speaking you in all that you are.

Hear and Live. Hear the Words that are Christ Jesus, Spirit and Word together, entering into you to be your life in all that you are. People of God, all across the earth, HEAR the voice of the Son of God, HEAR and LIVE! And having heard, dear Christian believers in Jesus, then turn and BE what you are, the Salvation of God in all creation.

“Let the Church be the Church; let Jerusalem arise across the whole earth. Let her name be a praise and a glory everywhere the name of Jesus is named. Let Christians everywhere LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

“Dear Father, let us be for Your people’s sake. It is so.”